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ABSTRACT

A study determined if homework influences the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and understanding. Subjects, 40 third graders, were divided into two groups--20 students received homework in vocabulary and 20 students did not. A test was administered to determine if homework had an effect on their understanding of the vocabulary. Results indicated that students who received homework had a better understanding of the vocabulary that was taught. A questionnaire was also given to teachers to assess their feelings about the worthiness of homework. Most of the teachers surveyed felt that homework increases vocabulary understanding. (Contains 20 references and 1 table of data. Vocabulary words, a vocabulary test, data, a letter to teachers, and the questionnaire are attached.) (RS)

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The Effects of Vocabulary Homework on Third Grade Achievement

by

Stacy Townsend

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Masters of Arts Degree

Kean College of New Jersey

April 1995

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine if homework influences the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and understanding.

Forty third grade students were utilized as subjects. Twenty students received homework in vocabulary and twenty students did not. A test was administered to determine if homework had an effect on their understanding of the vocabulary.

The test scores of the two groups were compared, and it was determined that the students who received homework had a better understanding of the vocabulary th t was taught.

A questionnaire was also given out to teachers to assess their feelings about the worthiness of homework. Most of the teachers surveyed felt that homework increases vocabulary understanding.

Acknowledgment

I wish to thank my mother, whose love and belief in me has always been my inspiration. I would also like to thank my father, who has been my greatest influence since the days when my classroom was a basement and my students were my dolls. Finally, thanks to Kate, my mentor and friend, whose understanding and support have always made me feel as if I could do anything.

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my husband Keith, whose love and support has guided me throughout this project, as well as in our lives together.

Mention the word "homework" to a group of teachers, parents or students, and be prepared to evoke a wide range of emotionally-charged opinions and feelings based on tradition, the work ethic, irrational reasoning, individual definitions, and, perhaps, even some research. The discussion will most likely include advantages as well as disadvantages. (Knorr, 1981; Earle 1992.)

It appears that since the turn of the century, homework has been periodically in and out of favor. Educators have not agreed upon a common definition of homework. Though many "kinds" of homework are mentioned in the literature, we lack any universally accepted taxonomy, constructs, or classifications of homework which would make discussions more meaningful. There are many proponents and many opponents of homework. Opinions regarding the advantages of homework are as prevalent as opinions regarding the disadvantages. (Knorr, 1981.)

There is little conclusive evidence available concerning the positive or negative effects of home study, either the regular assigned homework or the voluntary assignment. Although many articles have been written about homework or home study, most of them merely express a subjective viewpoint. (Mulry, 1961; Yeary, 1978.)

The literature reviews done over the past 60 years report conflicting results. There is no good evidence that homework produces better academic achievement. The topic is characterized more by emotional arguments and tradition than by empirical evidence. The few studies done have sought simplistic answers to complex questions. More than likely, the homework/ achievement relationship is influenced by a variety of factors, such as the ability level of the students, the nature of the homework assignment, and the type of follow-up by the teacher. (Jongsma, 1985.)

There is varied research findings on homework's effects on student achievement in the classroom.

A Duke University study conducted by Keith in 1972 concluded that "study time contributed significantly to student grades" and that "its direct affect was second only to that of intellectual ability." Based on such a finding, Keith said it was reasonable to predict that the amount of homework done would also affect general school achievement. (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh Division of Research, 1983.)

One enduring value of homework is that it furthers learning tasks through reinforcement, assimilation, practice and application, and has the support of current psychological principles based on research. (LeFrancois, 1991; Foyle, 1993.)

As far back as 1913, the Ladies Home Journal attacked homework as a useless practice with potential danger to children's health. Homework generally decreases during periods of opposition. Pressures such as declining test scores and grades, however, generally precede a swing back toward more homework. (Finstad, 1987.)

Looking at some of the earliest writings on the subject of homework, many educators and lay writers have opposed homework on grounds that it is unwholesome, professionally unsupervised, or allows children to practice mistakes. (Paschal, Weinstein, Walberg, 1983.)

Hypothesis

To provide additional evidence on this topic, a study was conducted in an attempt to answer the question: Does homework influence the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and understanding? It was hypothesized that homework does not have a significant effect on the vocabulary development of third grade students.

Procedure

Forty third grade students (from two classrooms) were utilized as subjects. All students were between eight and nine years of age and of varied racial backgrounds. The students were also of varied abilities but of similar educational background.

One class was taught vocabulary lessons by the author during the regular instructional time period, while the other class was taught during the author's daily preparation period.

The vocabulary lessons presented were built around The Chocolate Touch by Patrick Skene Catling. Each day a vocabulary lesson was conducted focusing on six words, prior to reading a chapter. (See appendix A.)

Various methods of vocabulary instruction were utilized, for example:

1) Context Method - Students were presented with the vocabulary words in meaningful context. Meaning was derived from the other words in the sentence.

2) Relating Words to Student Experience. - Students generated their own context for the terms being taught by answering questions about the words. (Example: Tell about something that is done quietly.)

3) Exclusion Brainstorming - Students used a list of possible associated words and excluded unrelated words in order to make sense of the meaning. Using this knowledge, the students constructed tentative definitions of the words. Students then read the text to test these definitions, refining them as they found additional information. Finally, the students used the words in other reading and writing tasks to make them their own.

4) Synonym Approach - The vocabulary word to be learned was given along with a synonym of that word. The author then explained to the students the relationship between the two words. For example, the author introduced the word difficult and explained that another word for it was hard, and that if a task is difficult, it is hard to do. The author then asked the students to name difficult tasks and tell why the tasks are difficult. Next, the author showed the students a sentence containing the word difficult.

5) Think-Aloud Approach - This approach was used to demonstrate the strategy of using context clues to determine meaning of unknown words. The author read the unknown word and various sentences under it with the word in the sentences. The author modeled the technique of using known words in a sentence to determine the meaning of unknown words.

The chapter was read orally by the author after the vocabulary lesson. There was also a brief discussion about the content of the chapter and occasional review of the vocabulary words.

One class was given homework each night to reinforce the new vocabulary learned that day. The kinds of homework assignments included: finding definitions in the dictionary, illustrating vocabulary words, writing paragraphs using the words, answering yes or no questions based on the understanding of the words, and synonym worksheets. The other sample of students did not receive any reinforcing homework.

At the end of three weeks, a teacher-made test was administered to assess the acquisition of the new vocabulary words. (See appendix B.) This test included matching of vocabulary words to definitions and deriving meaning from words used in context through the use of multiple choice. The test scores of the two groups were then compared and tested for significance using t-tests and conclusions drawn. (See appendix C.)

Also, a questionnaire and accompanying cover letter was distributed to the faculty in grades three through five about the effects of homework on achievement. (See appendix D.) This was done to assess teacher attitudes and feelings about the worthiness of homework.

Results

Table 1 illustrates the data collected when comparing the vocabulary test scores of two samples of students, one which was given homework, and one that was not given homework. The no-homework sample had a mean score of 58.4, with a standard deviation of 16.49. The homework sample had a mean score of 69.3, with a standard deviation of 14.02.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and t Between the Samples

	M	SD	t
No Homework	58.4	16.49	2.25
Homework	69.3	14.01	

<.05

The table reveals a t statistic of 2.25, which illustrates a significant difference in the test results of the two samples.

Questionnaires were distributed to nineteen teachers about the worthiness of homework, and questionnaires were returned. The majority of the teachers surveyed had more than ten years of teaching experience. Twelve teachers felt that homework increases vocabulary understanding. Three teachers did not feel that homework increases vocabulary understanding. One teacher felt there was a possible effect, and one teacher felt that homework should be personalized for each student's academic needs.

Conclusions

The results of this study reject the hypothesis that homework does not have a significant effect on the vocabulary development of third grade students. The comparison of test scores show that homework in vocabulary increases the students' understanding of the words.

The results of this study also show that some teachers' views need to be corrected as to the effectiveness and importance of giving homework as a reinforcement tool.

Homework and Achievement: Related Literature

Every day, millions of school-age children arrive home from school. Some bring massive amounts of homework with them, others bring no homework at all. Some homework is simply busywork, other homework is designed to reinforce and review what was learned in school.

Some children get homework assignments but don't do these assignments. Other children begin their homework, but never seem to finish these homework tasks. Some teachers assign no homework at all, while others assign minimal homework.

According to Shaughnessy and Siegel, there is a very strong relationship between homework and academic achievement. Children who do well in school spend a good deal of time on their homework and read a good deal while doing their homework. (1993).

Mention the word "homework" to a group of teachers, parents, and students, and be prepared to get a wide range of emotionally charged opinions and feelings based on tradition, the work ethic, irrational reasoning, individual definitions, and perhaps, even some research. The discussion will most likely include advantages such as "teaches responsibility," "develops independent study skills," "enriches school experiences," and "builds character," as well as disadvantages such as "causes tension and anxiety," "parents do the work," "no leisure time for students," and "disrupts family life." (Earle, 1992).

The question is raised, "is homework an effective tool?" Foyle attempts to answer this question. One enduring value of homework is that it furthers learning tasks through reinforcement, assimilation, practice and application, and has the support of current psychological principles based on research. (LeFrancois, 1991.)

Another advantage of homework is that it allows students to complete unfinished assignments and make up work. Homework also helps students who fall behind in schoolwork because of ability, intelligence, or circumstance.

But beyond make-up work and catch-up work, the K-12 teachers approached for this article, agreed that homework can develop students' independent study skills and work habits.

Not all homes provide good study conditions, which becomes a disadvantage to students. Homework may also be used to punish the entire class for the trespasses of a few students.

Sadly enough, the teachers agreed that homework is often ill-chosen and poorly designed due to teacher time constraints and lack of expertise. Many homework assignments are still thrown together at the last minute to fulfill a perceived requirement to assign homework.

According to Foyle, although there are disadvantages to homework, current research, wisdom and practice indicate that homework is necessary.

Interest in the area of homework is so widespread because its assignment in our schools affects a variety of persons. Obviously, the student is affected because it is he or she who must carry out the assignment. The teacher is involved in many ways. Planning for homework must be carried out by the teacher. The assignment and its subsequent evaluation is the responsibility of the teacher. Teachers are the first to admit that this aspect of the instructional process is a tedious job, yet they make these assignments because they are committed to carry out the various functions of teaching that will make the process successful, despite the undesirable elements that are a part of that assignment. Parents enter into the realm of homework because they are genuinely interested in their child's progress and feel that the assignment is going to complement their child's learning. There may be resistance to these assignments if these exercises interfere with the normal activities that are planned for the family unit. Thus , we see that homework - its assignment, its completion, and its assessment - forms a complex matrix from which positive or negative results can occur, depending upon the nature of that homework assignment. We must ask: Is homework a desirable or necessary component of good teaching? If it is not, why are teachers continually designing these exercises? If homework is, in truth, an essential ingredient in good teaching , why do all three parties (students, parents, teachers) resist its employment? Could it be that only certain types of homework are useful and that, once we identify what constitutes appropriate homework assignments, the resistance to this aspect of school teaching will be eliminated? (Check and Ziebell, 1980.)

According to J. Michael Palardy, teachers identify four major purposes for assigning homework. The first is that homework teaches students self-discipline, independence, and responsibility. Many teachers believe homework is warranted for these reasons alone.

The second major purpose of homework is probably the most controversial. It is that homework increase students' academic achievement. Although there are some mixed findings related to this purpose, most research does not provide statistically significant correlations of homework with general academic achievement. (England and Flatley, 1985.)

Two findings related to homework and student achievement, however, have neither been mixed or confusing. The first is that homework for primary grade children seems not only inappropriate but in many instances counterproductive. (Laconte, 1981.) The second is that homework usually begins in the fourth grade. (England and Flatley, 1985.)

The third major purpose of homework has been called "the most powerful." (Pendergrass, 1984.) It is that homework fulfills the expectations of students, parents and the public. Simply put, these constituent groups expect it. Responses to Gallup Poll questions of recent years reveal that the public favors more homework; that most students think homework is necessary; and that more than 95 percent of all teachers favor homework.

The fourth major purpose for homework is that it expands, explains, and eases time constraints on the curriculum because it permits students to have learning experiences in "real" situations as opposed to contrived situations. Homework gives parents insights into a school's philosophy, curriculum, and objectives.

From the literature and from comments received from teachers in a survey of elementary school teachers practices of parent involvement (Epstein and Becker, 1982), seven purposes of homework were identified:

Practice (to increase speed, mastery, or maintenance of skills);

Participation (to increase the involvement of each student with the learning task);

Personal development (to build student responsibility, honesty, perseverance time management, self confidence);

Parent-child relations (to establish communication between parent and child on the importance of schoolwork and learning);

Policy (to fulfill directives from administrators at the district or school level for a prescribed amount of homework per *week);*

Public relations (to inform parents about what is happening in class); or

Punishment (to remind students of the teacher's requirements for classwork or behavior).

Each purpose may be important, though most teachers say that the main reason they assign homework is to give students time to practice skills learned in class. (Becker and Epstein, 1982.)

Pendergrass compares homework and baseball games. He states that "hot dogs and cold drinks don't change the quality of play on the diamond, but it wouldn't be a real trip to the 'ole ball game without them. Likewise, school is not really school without homework, regardless of its impact/lack of impact on the quality of academic achievement. (1983.)

According to Jongsma, the literature reviews one over the past 60 years report conflicting results. There is no good evidence that homework produces better academic achievement. The topic is characterized more by emotional arguments and tradition than by empirical evidence. The studies done have sought simplistic answers to complex questions. More than likely, the homework/achievement relationship is influenced by a variety of factors such as the ability level of the students, the nature of the homework assignment, and the type of follow-up by the teacher (1985.)

Controversy over the positive and negative effects of homework occurred as early as 1842 in England (Gordon, 1980.) An early edition of the Cyclopaedia of Education indicated that children under nine years of age could not prepare new work at home and should not be given any "home-lessons."(Foyle and Bailey, 1983.)

In the first part of this century, a widely accepted theory of learning presented the mind as a kind of big muscle that needed development. Memorization was stressed in school as exercise for the mind, and homework was considered important in disciplining the mind. Difficult and disagreeable assignments were justified on this basis.

Shortly this theory was disproved, and educators and parents began to question homework. Some educators related the ideas of theorists such as Pestalozzi and Herbart to homework and began to consider student interest as an important factor.

They began to see that the teacher's ability to create interest in homework was important. In 1926, an article by Good appeared in the Elementary School Journal stating, "There should be no compulsory home tasks assigned in the lower grades, and there may be serious doubts as to the wisdom of requiring homework in any of the grades of the elementary school . . . the reasonable plan being to have such work done voluntarily, following the inclination of the child." (Check, 1966.)

Most elementary teachers and schools that advocate the use of homework "view homework as an extension of learning opportunities and an integral part of the teaching and learning process" (Montgomery County Public Schools). The homework research base at the elementary school level gives some specific guidance which is applicable to homework policies.

Crawford and Carmichael (1937) conducted an elementary school homework experiment in which they compared a three year period wherein the school allowed homework in grades five through eight with another three year period in which the school did not allow homework. Crawford and Carmichael found no difference in student achievement between the two periods of time. However, they found that students without homework received lower grades in high school than the students with homework. Homework appeared to be necessary for successful high school work but not necessary for achievement in elementary schools. (Foyle and Lyman, 1989.)

Advocacy for discontinuance of homework prevailed in the 1940's. A research study was conducted by Anderson in 1946. he used two groups of junior high school students - one that received homework assignments and another group that did not receive homework. Each group contained 29 students. The students receiving regular homework assignments showed higher achievement gains in English, social studies, and mathematics than those students not receiving homework.

Anderson found that while bright students in the non-homework group achieved almost as well as the bright students in the homework group, the average and below average students in the non-homework group were much less successful than their counterparts in the homework group. (Friesen, 1979.)

During the 1950's, there was less concern about the continuance of homework than about the learning emphasis of homework. A new emphasis on activity and on student initiative and responsibility in the effective use of out of school time began to change homework practices. (Knorr, 1981.)

Schain (1954) reported a limited experiment among students in an American history class. He found that the bright students did well with or without homework, but they did slightly better with homework. The average students did much better on daily quizzes and on essay tests when they had regular homework assignments. The students with low IQs seemed lost without homework and achieved at a higher level when in the homework group. (Friesen, 1979.)

Strang (1955) pointed out that there was a general trend toward no homework in the primary grades, some in the middle grades, and a consistent amount of homework in the high schools. Strang also stated that in the elementary schools the correlation between school marks and time spent on homework is very small. (Friesen, 1979.)

Then came Sputnik in 1957. Suddenly there was a trend back toward more homework and toward more subject matter emphasis in homework. At about the same time, colleges and universities were raising their entrance standards and the push for "academic excellence" was on. Homework was viewed as a means to that end. (Check, 1966; Wildman, 1968; Nea, 1975.)

Hines (1957) conducted a year-long experiment to determine the effect of homework on achievement in two plane geometry classes. Nineteen matched pairs were formed on the basis of age, intelligence, and first-year algebra grades and then randomly assigned to the two classes. The experimental group received no homework and the control group received homework two or three times each week.

The results of the study showed: (1) that the scores on every test given during the year favored the homework group, (2) the differences between the two groups were greater on cumulative tests than on chapter tests covering more recent materials, and (3) if students were graded on tests only, homework would increase the grade of the average student by one letter grade. Several factors limit the validity of Hines' study. The final results used only sixteen of the original nineteen matched pairs. Also, each group was taught by a different teacher. Hines stated that it is possible that the differences found could be accounted for by differences in skill or zeal on the part of the two teachers involved. (Friesen, 1979.)

In 1960, the Educational Policy Commission of the National Education Association listed homework as one of ten contemporary issues in education. There was a trend in the early sixties toward more and more homework. (Hedges, 1964.) This move was strengthened by the fact that what limited research was available at the time seemed to indicate a positive relationship between homework and academic achievement. (Knorr, 1981.)

Goldstein (1960) reviewed thirty years of research on homework and concluded that preconceived ideas about the value of homework have often interfered with the interpretation of research findings. The results of most homework research are inconclusive and statistically insignificant, Goldstein reported, but the few significant findings seem to suggest that homework favors higher academic achievement in the upper elementary and secondary grades for some pupils, in some subjects. (Friesen, 1979.)

The purpose of a study designed by Whelan (1966) was to examine the effect of systematic homework assignments in English and arithmetic on the achievement of fourth grade students. Four hundred students were equated by age, sex, intelligence and subject-matter achievement and assigned to either the experimental or control group. A total of 100 homework sheets were assigned to the students in the experimental group in each of the subject areas. The control group received no homework sheets.

Whelan chose to use the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills as a criterion measure. He reported that completion of systemic homework assignments in English and arithmetic by the experimental students did not result in scores significantly higher than those made by the control group. No significant differences were noted on the factors of sex and ability when comparing the experimental and control groups. (Friesen, 1979.)

John Check conducted a survey in which he administered 1016 questionnaires to six diversely different populations. His respondents were (a) students of lower and upper elementary grades, from junior high and from senior high schools, (b) parents of the four levels above, (c) teachers of the four designated levels and professors from the University of Michigan, Flint College, and (d) education majors who were at that time electing educational psychology or educational sociology.

Returns of questionnaires were almost 100 per cent. The items of information sought through the questionnaire were:

(a) the school in which the child was enrolled.

(b) whether the respondent was a parent, teacher, or student; and if a student, what grade.

(c) whether the respondent felt that homework should be assigned.

(d) to find out why or why not such assignments should be made.

After tabulating the data from the questionnaire and analyzing it, the following statements are in order:

(1) Elementary, junior, and senior high students generally feel that homework assignments are necessary. Only 20 per cent were definitely against such assignments. However, almost one-half of them wanted to reserve the right to question the type of assignments given.

(2) Parochial school students are no different from public school children in regard to homework.

(3) The highest ratio of negative responses to homework came from children in the professional home. On the other hand, there was only one professional parent who was positively against such activities.

(4) Out of 205 parents responding, only seven rejected homework in any form. About one-half questioned the nature and the amount of homework assignments that should be given.

(5) Of 90 teacher respondents, only one desired no homework at all. Half of them were concerned about the kind of assignments given.

(6) Professors at Flint College are strongly in favor of take-home assignments.

(7) Nearly 55 per cent of education majors (candidates for teaching) want homework. Another 38 per cent are in favor of these assignments but with conditions prescribed. (1966.)

The frenzy began to subside in the mid-sixties when some of the affects of too much pressure on students became evident to some. Though administrators, teachers, and parents remained generally in favor of homework, they began to question again the amount and kinds given. Some educators now questioned whether current homework practices made any sense in light of what was known about learning theory. Some educators began to consider that there may be alternatives to homework such as guided study in school. Most importantly, the mental health aspects of homework practices were receiving more attention and the American Educational Research Association took a stand. (Wildman, 1968.)

> For mental health, children and young people need to engage in worthwhile out-of-school tasks suited to their individual capacities. Homework should supply such tasks and reasonable freedom in carrying them out.

Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it takes time devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents. (Knorr, 1981.)

During the late sixties and early seventies, the pressure on students for academic achievement in terms of grades generally receded. Educators were focused more on such things as social adjustment and emotional development of students. Affective education merged in the 1970's. Research focused on attitudes as well as achievement.

Despite insufficient research evidence supporting that an increase in homework results in greater achievement, there has been a clamor by parents and others for more homework. Educators responded.(Lee and Pruitt, 1979.) (Knorr, 1981.)

Doane (1973) studied the effects of homework on arithmetic achievement using a sample of white, middle class, suburban fourth grade pupils. Half of the pupils received homework during the instructional period and an equivalent group, matched on the basis of arithmetic performance, received no homework during the instructional period. Four performance levels were formed

within each of the two treatments. Doane reported these findings: (1) there was a significant difference in arithmetic achievement scores between the students assigned homework and the students who did not have homework assignments. (2) students in the highest performance level profited most from homework. (3) there was a descending order of nonsignificant correlations ranging from a slightly positive correlation at the performance level to almost no relationship at the third level to a slightly negative relationship with the students at the lowest level of performance. (Friesen, 1979.)

Harris (1973) sought to determine the relationship between homework assignments and achievement. In several experiments with elementary school children, he found that when the students were given daily homework assignments in social studies and mathematics, relatively few children completed the assignments and that student performance was only slightly affected. However, by providing consequences for accurate completion of homework, the number of students accurately completing the homework assignments was increased. In addition, assignment of homework and consequences for accurate completion of homework was associated with increased accuracy of performance in the classroom as compared with times when no homework was assigned. (Friesen, 1979.)

Homework in the eyes of most educators is an integral part of the educational experience. It extends time available for learning, encourages youngsters to work independently, and gives parents an insight into the school's curriculum.

Several of the national reports critical of American education in the 1980's suggested homework as a way to strengthen academic standards in the nation's schools. The National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 noted specifically that, compared to other nations, American students spent much less time on school work. (Turvey, 1986.)

Foyle and Bailey (1985) found that homework did increase student achievement only when the homework was regularly assigned, clearly stated, regularly collected, promptly graded, and quickly returned.

Regularly assigned homework requires that students spend additional time on course subjects in a consistent manner. Clearly stated homework assignment sheets help students understand what is expected in the homework. These types of clearly stated homework assignments give parents a positive image of the educational process and allow parents to help students with homework. Regularly collected homework indicates to the student that the homework is important and is necessary to the course of study. Promptly graded homework gives almost immediate feedback to the teacher in terms of the students' understanding of subject matter. Promptly returned homework gives almost immediate feedback to the student in terms of any errors of thinking or understanding of the course content. By following these homework guidelines, homework can be a bridge between the school and home as well as a positive daily public relations package.

The effects of homework on achievement are unclear. Few valid studies on the effects of homework were found in the literature reviewed by Professor R. Paschal. (Paschal, Weinstein, and Walberg, 1984.) Of the fifteen valid studies Paschal located, she concluded that homework aids achievement when the teacher continues input into the completed homework. Friesen also examined research studies on homework that were done between the years 1923 and 1976. In his survey, he found that twelve experiments demonstrated positive effects of homework on achievement while eleven demonstrated no differences or negative effects on achievement. (Friesen, 1978). Existing research is not clear about whether homework at an elementary level is important for effective learning. (Epstein, 1983.) (Mucha, 1987.)

According to Laconte, homework assignments for which students are highly motivated and which they feel are useful will promote learning, and those which students see as drudgery will

not. They may, in fact, further decrease student interest and lead to cheating. Required exercises, whether practice or preparation, are best accomplished in class under teacher supervision. Homework is best reserved for assignments that extend classwork and increase student interest and motivation. Good teachers have known this for generations.

Kotnour has a different slant on homework. He questions the priorities - that of the family versus that of the school. He says that we cannot neglect the fact that compulsory homework affects not only the students, but also his or her entire family. Homework keeps students from participating in family activities, whether inside or outside the home. How many personal activities of students are curtailed because of the imposition of homework on the time limitations of their evening schedule? (1978.)

Homework will continue to be a part of the educational system. Good homework assignments should build on classwork, and reinforce or review it. Although the Forum of Educational Organization Leaders has recommended homework, the forum nevertheless offers the following cautions:

(1) Increase the amount of homework only if students have appropriate places to study.

(2) Plan homework as carefully as classroom instruction.

(3) Provide teachers with smaller classes and adequate help to correct homework.

(4) Individualize homework assignments, including long as well as short-term projects; make assignments relevant, avoiding busywork; and carefully evaluate or grade all homework. (O'Donnell, 1985.)

Although many people view homework as an essential part of education, it has been the object of strong controversy over the years. Those for homework claim that it extends learning time, fosters initiative and responsibility and brings home and school closer together. Critics, on the other hand, claim that homework infringes on leisure time and community activities, is busy

work, causes family feuds, and discriminates against those who have inappropriate conditions for home study.(Finstad, 1987.)

It is clear to see that the subject of homework versus no homework and its effects on achievement is a hot topic. Many researchers have found conflicting results in their studies. The majority have concluded that it is not a cut and dried answer, but rather different variables affect the viewpoints. Homework's effects on achievement correlate with family life, students' attitude, family attitude, and the situation in the home. Some researchers agree that the teacher's actions greatly influence the effectiveness of homework. Some feel homework needs to be an extension of classwork, must be fully explained, commented upon, returned to the student and then reviewed. Researchers have also found that parents' attitudes toward homework are diverse as well. Some view it as a necessary extension of school, while others see it as mere busywork.

Questions about homework still remain. We, as educators, still need to get a handle on how we feel personally and professionally about assigning homework. In most school districts, the assigning of homework is mandatory. There are ways however to make homework a meaningful experience that will facilitate learning for students, parents and teachers. As educators, we need to take into account many variables which affect our students, and act accordingly. Teachers need to be aware that all homework assignments do not always have the desired outcome that we had intended. We need to weigh the pros and cons of assignments so that we can be sure that the assignment will reinforce the skills we intended and have a positive effect on the learning experiences of the child.

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Appendixes

Vocabulary introduced for The Chocolate Touch:

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
orchestra	absentmindedly	ambled
lozenges	eagerly	swished
devoured	quietly	insisted
cross	heartily	protested
recited	firmly	immediately
reproved	hastily	puzzled

Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
schoolfellows	spectacles	excuse
defeat	corridor	spoiled
sneered	treadle	protested
jungle gym	enamel	glee
suspiciously	accurately	retorted
slyest	sternly	scorned

Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
securely	distributed	halted
spacious	passage	indignant
quenching	rehearsals	crouched
appetizing	individual	drenched
morsel	unison	dainty
opaque	baton	wept

Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12
stroll	abruptly	gratefully
doubtful	selfishness	crockery
exhaustive	proprietor	trembling
brimful	pleasantries	briskly
splintery	acquiring	unfamiliar
*chocolatitis	murmur	tilted

* Nonsense word

B

Name:

Date:

Vocabulary Test: The Chocolate Touch

Match the word on the left to its definition on the right.

Put the correct letter on the line.

1) devoured _____	A. correctly
2) heartily _____	B. strongly
3) reproved _____	C. not letting light through
4) protested _____	D. to pardon or overlook
5) defeat _____	E. anger caused by injustice
6) sneered _____	F. to eat up greedily
7) firmly _____	G. to smile in an angry way
8) excuse _____	H. complain about things
9) accurately ____	I. suddenly
10) retorted _____	J. showing enthusiasm
11) passage _____	K. upset, irritated
12) indignant _____	L. a brief piece of music
13) cross _____	M. loss of a contest or battle
14) abruptly _____	N. scolded
15) opaque _____	0. to answer back

Read each sentence below. Think about the meaning of the underlined word and choose the letter of its meaning.

1) Susan completed the art project <u>hastily</u>.

   A. with great care

   B. by herself

   C. in a hurry

2) Mom <u>ambled</u> into the kitchen this morning.

   A. a sweeping way of walking

   B. a slow way of walking

   C. a quick way of walking

3) The teacher <u>insisted</u> that the homework be completed.

   A. demanded

   B. liked

   C. wanted

4) The thief looked around the bank <u>suspiciously</u>.

   A. not trustingly

   B. jealously

   C. carefully

5) The man spoke to us sternly about not running around the store.

A. quitely

B. quickly

C. firmly

6) The baby spit out the food because she scorned vegetables.

A. liked

B. disliked

C. wanted

7) That baby bird was eating a morsel of food.

A. worm

B. lot

C. tidbit

8) It is nice to have a spacious bedroom of your own.

A. roomy

B. crowded

C. decorated

9) The TV dinner was an individual serving.

A. tiny

B. giant

C. one person

10) The class answered the teacher in unison.

A. alone

B. all together

C. one at a time

11) Mary halted when she heard the crash.

A. cried

B. jumped

C. stopped

12) Those dainty yellow curtains were blowing in the breeze.

A. delicate

B. pretty

C. lacy

13) My sister made an exhaustive search for her homework.

A. tired

B. thorough

C. small

14) I heard a murmur in the back of the classroom.

A. loud voice

B. mumbled voice

C. low voice

15) I am acquiring good writing skills because I have a diary to write in.

A. getting

B. accepting

C. practicing

16) That puppy was unfamiliar to Joe.

A. known

B. not known

C. nice

17) The sentences on the blackboard were tilted.

A. long

B. tall

C. slanted

18) The leader of the troop recited the rules.

A. told in detail

B. recalled

C. told quickly

19) The boy eagerly ran down the stairs on Christmas morning.

A. slowly

B. anxiously

C. quickly

B

20) Tom felt glee when his sister was born.

A. depressed

B. jealousy

C. joy

C

No Homework Sample		Homework Sample	
1)	57	1)	66
2)	54	2)	83
3)	80	3)	46
4)	31	4)	60
5)	37	5)	57
6)	40	6)	77
7)	43	7)	86
8)	57	8)	77
9)	74	9)	54
10)	80	10)	60
11)	77	11)	54
12)	57	12)	77
13)	51	13)	51
14)	69	14)	80
15)	89	15)	89
16)	49	16)	69
17)	77	17)	86
18)	51	18)	89
19)	46	19)	54
20)	49	20)	71

D

January, 1995

Dear Colleagues,

I am currently writing my master's thesis. The topic of study is: homework versus no homework and its effects on vocabulary development in third grade students.

It is important to my study that you read and complete this SHORT questionnaire and return it to my mailbox. Please do not sign your name. All responses will be kept confidential.

Circle only one answer per question, and feel free to add additional comments if you wish.

Please return this questionnaire today! If interested you may see the results in May. Thank you for your help.

Stacy Townsend

D

Vocabulary Homework and Achievement

Directions: Please circle all answers. Add comments if you wish to contribute more information.

1) How many years have you been teaching?

0-10

11-20

over 20

2) Do you feel that homework increases vocabulary understanding?

yes

no

If yes, in what way? _____

3) What is your main purpose in assigning homework?

drill

extends classwork

problem-solving

responsibility-builder

district policy

If you chose district policy, if it wasn't policy, would you still assign homework?

yes

no

4) How many days per week do you assign homework?

0 1 2 3 4 5

5) Homework submitted is:

ungraded

spot-checked

graded

other(explain) _____

6) Does homework count toward report card grades?

yes

no

If yes, explain. _____